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Advocate of Peace.

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President Wilson's Views on the Increase of Armaments.

President Wilson's message read to Congress on December 8 makes it clear that he has no sympathy with those who are making every possible effort to foist upon the nation a great military establishment like those of Europe. He says:

"We are at peace with all the world. No one who speaks counsel based on fact or drawn from a just and candid interpretation of realities can say that there is reason to fear that from any quarter our independence or the integrity of our territory is threatened. Dread of the power of any other nation we are incapable of. We are not jealous of rivalry in the fields of commerce or of any other peaceful achievement. We mean to live our own lives as we will; but we mean also to let live. We are indeed a

true friend to all the nations of the world, because we threaten none, covet the possessions of none, desire the overthrow of none. Our friendship can be accepted and is accepted without reservation, because it is offered in a spirit and for a purpose which no one need ever question or suspect. Therein lies our greatness. We are the champions of peace and of concord; and we should be very jealous of this distinction which we have sought to earn. Just now we should be particularly jealous of it, because it is our dearest present hope that this character and reputation may presently, in God's providence, bring us an opportunity such as has seldom been vouchsafed any nation—the opportunity to counsel and obtain peace in the world and reconciliation and a healing settlement of many a matter that has cooled and interrupted the friendship of nations. This is the time above all others when we should wish and resolve to keep our strength by self-possession, our influence by preserving our ancient principles of action."

We ought not to have, the President declares, a large standing army, nor even a reserve army. We should not ask our young men to spend their best years in making soldiers of themselves. The National Guard of the States he approves, and even recommends increase, but only always in consistency with the established principles of our national government.

"A citizenry trained and accustomed to arms," such as the President seems to recommend, will raise several very serious questions. The citizen soldiery long used in Switzerland is an entirely different thing from what the President seems to mean. The Swiss citizen soldiery is not voluntary in any sense of the term. All male citizens are compelled to take military service and be trained a certain length of time in each year, but not long enough to interfere seriously with their ordinary occupations. A citizenry voluntarily trained to arms, to discipline, to drill and maneuver, to the maintenance and sanitation of camps, such as Mr. Wilson outlines, would be of no use whatever unless it involved an element of compulsion. A national militia of this sort, if it could be so called, would be infinitely more difficult to organize and develop than a militia of a State. It is therefore, we think, certain never to be attempted. It would be universally opposed by American young men and even more resolutely opposed by professional soldiers. The only way in which a great American standing army, such as certain militarists are loudly advocating, can be ultimately prevented is the determination of the people and Congress to insist that the national military force—that is, the standing army—shall be kept down to the simplest use of national police, as the nation has heretofore done.

As to the navy, the President deals chiefly with the situation created through the war by certain "nervous and excited" people, who are sure, they say, that the defenses of the nation have been woefully neglected, and that attack is quite certain before long to be launched by some of the great warring powers against New York or San Francisco or elsewhere. He declares that the navy has always been regarded as our natural means of defense, that our ships are our natural bulwarks. We shall be strong upon the seas in the future as in the past, he assures the people, but not for aggression or conquest. We have not neglected our national defense, and we shall easily be able and ready to prepare our defenses whenever there is any just occasion requiring them, "after a fashion perfectly consistent with the peace of the world; the abiding friendship of States, and the unhampered freedom of all."

The President reminds Congress of the great tasks and duties of peace which challenge our best powers, to build what will last, to develop our life and resources for the benefit of the American people and the people of the whole world. In the extraordinary situation occasioned by the disastrous war in Europe the appeal of the President of the United States could hardly be more fitting and noble, and we shall be disappointed if the nation does not respond quickly and wholeheartedly. "This is assuredly the opportunity for which a people and a government like ours were raised up—the opportunity not only to speak, but actually to embody and exemplify the counsels of peace and amity and the lasting concord which is based on justice and fair and generous dealing."

Editorial Notes.

Centenary of Peace.

While at first thought the present may seem an incongruous time in which to observe a centenary of peace between even two such nations as Great Britain and the United States, there is, on the other hand, an unusual opportunity to teach the lessons of such a period of peace. The Christmas Eve services throughout our country in honor of the signing of the Treaty of Ghent in 1814 have been many and have been occasions of earnest and devout supplication to Almighty God for the return of peace, and of sincere expressions of thankfulness for the great blessing of peace which we enjoy in this land.

There is a further celebration which the churches of America are being asked to observe, that of the ratification of the Treaty of Ghent, which falls on Sunday, February 14. Many organizations, such as the Church Peace Union, and various peace societies, such as the Buffalo Peace Society, are promoting this observance as far as possible. It is sincerely to be desired that every church throughout our land hold peace memorial services on this February Sabbath. The churches hold in

their hands great power to mould public opinion in favor of harmony and good will among nations. If it be true, as Mr. Wells has said in England, that "the European catastrophe is the tragedy of the weak, though righteous, Christian will," a serious indictment rests on those who should have shown the world a better way. Through these centenary celebrations much can be done to drive home the argument that preparation for peace has resulted in peace, while war preparations have brought about the present terrible catastrophe.

Dutch Anti-War Council.

In the November issue of THE ADVOCATE OF PEACE mention was made of the formation in October of the "Nederlandsche Anti-Oorlog Raad," or Dutch Anti-War Council, consisting of representatives of all organizations in Holland interested in securing a lasting peace at the conclusion of the present war. The organization is developing rapidly and is entering on active propaganda. It has issued a manifesto to the Dutch people, urging them to join the movement at once, lending all possible aid, both material and moral.

"According to human calculation," the appeal says, "there is reason to believe that the war is still in an early stage, and that, during the first few months, no one will get a hearing but the cannon. But many tremendous events of war have happened already, and, on the contrary, signs of a different nature have become manifest. We do not, of course, venture to prophesy as to the duration of the fatal war. But a longer delay would not be justifiable, if we intend to be ready in time. A long time will be required for the preparation of a strong co-operation, both at home and abroad, and no less will be needed for the study outlined above. It is for that reason that we appeal to you to act, and that we ask for a sympathetic response, both from individuals and groups."

The council defines its objects to be:

1. A study of the causes which have led to the present war and which might lead to new wars in the future.
2. An examination of the means by which a conclusion of the present war might be promoted and a peace concluded which would not carry the seeds of new wars in it.
3. A study of the consequences of the present war on economic, moral, and intellectual aspects of life.
4. A consideration of the reforms which will have to be made in national and international relations so as to prevent wars in the future.
5. The formation of a strong national and international organization of all pacifists.

The council has also sent out a strong document "On Behalf of the Coming Peace," an appeal for general co-operation and timely preparation. It is signed by sixty-eight of the Dutch pacifists, political leaders, members of the States-General, professors, and others. In this a strong plea is made for co-operation in other countries, and, if possible, the formation of similar representative anti-war councils. The Dutch Peace Society, "Vrede Door Recht," has taken the initiative in the forming of